

A
P L A T F O R M
O F
Church-Discipline

Gathered out of the
W O R D O F G O D ;

And Agreed upon
By the Elders and Messengers of the Churches
Assembled in the

S Y N O D
At Cambridge in N.E.

To be presented to the Churches and General Court for their Consideration and Acceptance in the Lord, the 8th Month, Anno 1649.

Psal. 84. 1. How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts?

Psal. 26. 8. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.

Psal. 27. 4. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord; and to enquire in his Temple.

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THE PREFACE.

THe setting forth of the Publick Confession of the Faith of Churches hath a double end, and both tending to Publick Edification: First, the maintenance of the Faith intire within it self: Secondly, the holding forth of Unity and Harmony, both amongst, and with other Churches. Our Churches here, as (by the grace of Christ) we believe and profess the same Doctrine of the Truth of the Gospel, which generally is received in all the Reformed Churches of Christ in Europe: so especially we desire not to vary from the Doctrine of Faith and Truth hold forth by the Churches of our Native Country. For though it be not one Native Country that can breed us all of one minde; nor ought we for to have the glorious faith of our Lord Jesus with respect of persons; yet as Paul who was himself a Jew, professed to hold forth the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, and of the resurrection of the dead, according as he knew his godly Countrymen did, who were Jews by nature (Gal. 2. 15. Acts 26. 6. 7.) so we, who are by nature English-men, do desire to hold forth the same Doctrine of Religion (specially in Fundamental) which we see and know to be held by the Churches of England, according to the truth of the Gospel.

The more we discern (that which we do, and have cause to do with incessant mourning and trembling) the unkinde, and unbrotherly, and unchristian Contentions of our godly Brethren and Countrymen, in matters of Church Government; the more earnestly do we desire to see them joyned together in one common Faith, and our selves with them. For this end, having perused the publick Confession of Faith, agreed upon by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and finding the sum and substance thereof (in matters of Doctrine) to express not their own judgements onely, but ours also: and being likewise called upon by our godly Magistrates, to draw up a publick Confession of that Faith which is constantly taught, and generally professed amongst us; We thought good to present unto them, and with them to our Churches, and with them to all the Churches of Christ abroad, our professed and hearty Assent and Attestation to the whole Confession of Faith (for substance of Doctrine) which the Reverend Assembly presented to the Religious and Honourable Parliament of England: Excepting only some Sections in the 25, 30, and 31 Chapters of their Confession, which concern Points of Controversie in Church-discipline; touching which, we refer our selves to the draught of Church Discipline in the ensuing Treatise.

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The truth of what we here declare, may appear by the unanimous vote of the Synod of the Elders and Messengers of our Churches assembled at Cambridge, the last of the sixth Month, 1648. which joyntly p^{as}sed in these words: This Synod having perused and considered (with much gladness of heart, and thankfulness to God) the Confession of Faith published of late by the Reverend Assembly in England, do judge it to be very holy, orthodox, and judicious in all matters of Faith: and do therefore freely and fully consent thereunto, for the substance thereof. Onely in those things which have respect to Church Government and Discipline, we refer our selves to the Platform of Church-Discipline, agreed upon by this present Assembly; and do therefore think it meet, that this Confession of Faith should be commended to the Churches of Christ amongst us, and to the Honourd Court, as worthy of their due consideration and acceptance. Howbeit, we may not conceal, that the doctrine of Vocation expressed in Chap. 10. Sect. 1. and summarily repeated Chap. 13. Sect. 1. passed not without some debate. Yet considering that the term of Vocation, and others by which it is described, are capable of a large, or more strickt sense and use, and that it is not intended to binde apprehensions precisely in point of order or method, there hath been a general condescendency thereunto.

Now by this our p^{as}sed consent and free concurrence with them in all the do^{ct}trines of Religion, we hope it may appear to the world, that as we are a remnant of the people of the same Nation with them; so we are professors of the same common Faith, and fellow heirs of the same common Salvation. Tea moreover, as this our profession of the same Faith with them, will exempt us (even in their judgements) from suspicion of Heresie; so (we trust) it may exempt us in the like sort from suspicion of Schism: that though we are forced to dissent from them in matters of Church-discipline, yet our dissent is not taken up out of arrogancy of spirit in our selves (whom they see willingly condescend to learn of them) neither is it carried with uncharitable censoriousness towards them, (both which are the proper and essential characters of Schism) but in meekness of wisdom, as we walk along with them, and follow them as they follow Christ: so where we conceive a different apprehension of the minde of Christ (as it falleth out in some few points touching Church-Order) we still reserve due reverence to them (whom we judge to be, through Christ, the glorious Lights of both Nations) and onely crave leave (as in spirit we are bound) to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and (after the Apostles example) as we believe, so we speak.

And if the example of such poor Out-casts as our selves might prevail, if not with all (for that were too great a blessing to hope for) yet with some or other of our Brethren in England, so far as they are come to minde and speak the same thing

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thing with such as dissent from them, we hope in Christ it would not only moderate the harsh judging and condemning of one another in such differences of judgement as may be found in the choicest Saints; but also prevent (by the mercy of Christ) the peril of the distraction and distraction of all the Churches in both Kingdoms. Otherwise, if Brethren shall go on to bite and devour one another, the Apostle feared (as we also with sadness of heart do) it will tend to the consuming of them, and us all: which the Lord prevent.

We are not ignorant, that (besides these expressions of Heresie and Schism) other Exceptions also are taken at our Way of Church Government, but (as we conceive) upon as little grounds. As,

1. That by admitting none into the fellowship of our Church but Saints by calling, we rob many Parish Churches of their best Members, to make up one of our Congregations; which is not onely to gather Churches out of Churches (a thing unheard-of in Scripture) but also to weaken the hearts and hands of the best Ministers in the Parishes, by despoiling them of their best hearers.
2. That we provide no course for the gaining, and calling in of ignorant, and erroneous, and scandalous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our Churches, and so exclude from the wholesome Remedy of Church Discipline.
3. That in our Way, we sow seeds of division, and hindrance of edification in every family: whilst admitting into our Churches only voluntaries, the Husband will be of one Church, the Wife of another; the Parents of one Church, the Children of another; the Master of one Church, the Servants of another. And so the Parents and Masters being of different Churches from their Children and Servants, they cannot take a just account of their profiting by what they hear: yea, by this means the Husbands, Parents, and Masters, shall be chargeable to the maintenance of many other Churches and Church-Officers, besides their own: which will prove a charge and burthen unsupportable.

But for Answer. As to the first: For gathering Churches out of Churches, we cannot say that it is a thing unheard of in Scripture. The first Christian Church was gathered out of the Jewish Church, and out of many Synagogues in that Church, and consisted partly of the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, partly of the Galileans: who though they kept some communion in some sorts of public worship with the Temple, yet neither did they frequent the Sacrifices, nor repair to the Sanhedrim for the determining of their Church-causes, but kept intimate and constant communion with the Apostles Church in all the Ordinances of the Gospel. And for the first Christian Church of the Gentiles at Antioch, it appeared in

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have been gathered and constituted partly of the dispersed Brethren of the Church at Jerusalem (whereof some were men of Cyprus and Cyrene) and partly of the believing Gentiles, Acts 11. 20, 21.

If it be said, The first Christian Church at Jerusalem, and that at Antioch, were gathered not out of any Christian Church, but out of the Jewish Temple and Synagogues, which were shortly after to be abolished: and their gathering to Antioch, was upon occasion of dispersion in time of Persecution.

We desire it may be considered, 1. That the members of the Jewish Church were more strongly and straitly tyed by express holy covenant, to keep fellowship with the Jewish Church till it was abolished, then any members of Christian Parish churches are wont to be tyed to keep fellowship with their Parish-churches. The Episcopal Canons, which binde them to attend on their Parish-church, it is likely they are now abolished with the Episcopacy. The Common Law of the Land is satisfied (as we conceive) if they attend upon the worship of God in any other Church, though not within their own Parish. But no such like covenant of God, nor any other Religious tie lyeth upon them to attend the worship of God in their own Parish-church, as did lye upon the Jews to attend upon the worship of God in their Temple and Synagogues.

2. Though the Jewish Temple-church at Jerusalem was to be abolished, yet that doth not make the desertion of it by the members to be lawful, till it was abolished. Future abolition is no warrant for present desertion, unless it be lawful in some case whilst the Church is yet in present standing to desert it; so wit, either for avoiding of present pollutions, or for hope of greater edification, and so for better satisfaction to conscience in either. Future events (or foresight of them) do not dissolve present Relations: else wives, children, servants, might desert their husbands, parents, masters, when they be mortally sick.

3. What the Members of the Jewish Church did, in joyning to the Church at Antioch in time of Persecution, it may well be conceived the Members of any Christian Church may do the like for satisfaction of conscience. Peace of conscience is more desireable then the peace of the outward man; and freedom from scruples of conscience is more comfortable to a sincere heart, then freedom from Persecution.

If it be said, These Members of the Christian Church at Jerusalem that joyined to the Church at Antioch, removed their Habitations together with their Relations: which if the Brethren of the Congregational Way would do, it would much abate the grievance of their departure from their Presbyterial Churches.

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We verily could wish them so to do, as well approving the like removal of habitation, in case of changing Church-Relations (provided that it may be done without too much detriment to their outward estates) and we for our parts have done the same. But to put a necessity of removal of habitation in such a case, it is to foment and cherish a corrupt principle of making civil cohabitation, if not a formal cause, yet at least a proper adjunct of Church-Relation: which the truth of the Gospel doth not acknowledge. Now to foment an error to the prejudice of the truth of the Gospel, is not to walk with a right foot according to the truth of the Gospel, as Paul judgeth, Gal. 2. 14.

4. We do not think it meet or safe, for a Member of a Presbyterial Church forthwith to desert his Relation to his Church, but, he himself to the fellowship of a Congregational Church, though he may discern some defect in the estate or government of his own. For,

1. Faithfulness of brotherly-love in Church-Relation, requireth that the Members of the Church should first convince their Brethren of their sinful defects, and duely wait for their reformation, before they depart from them. For if we must take such a course for the healing of a private Brother, in a way of brotherly love, with much meekness and patience; how much more ought we so to walk with like tenderness towards a whole Church.

Again, 2. By the hasty departure of sound Members from a defective Church, Reformation is not promoted, but many times retarded, and corruption increased. Whereas on the contrary, while sincere Members breathing after purity of Reformation abide together, they may (by the blessing of God upon their faithful endeavours) prevail much with their Elders and Neighbours towards a Reformation; it may be, so much as that their Elders in their own Church shall receive none to the Seals but visible Saints; and in the Classis shall put forth no authoritative act (but consultative onely) touching the Members of other Churches; nor, touching their own; but with the consent (silent consent at least) of their own Church: Which two things, if they can obtain with any humble, meek, holy, faithful endravours, we conceive they might (by the grace of Christ) finde liberty of conscience to continue their Relation with their own Presbyterial Church, without scruple.

5. But to adde a word further, touching the gathering of Churches out of Churches; what if there were no express example of such a thing extant in the Scriptures? that which we are wont to answer the Antipedobaptists, may suffice here, It is enough if any evidence thereof may be gathered from just consequence of Scripture-light. Doctor Ames his judgement concerning this case,

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ease, passeth (for ought we know) without exception, which he gave in his 4th Book of Conscience, in Answer to 2 Qu. Chap. 14. Num. 16. If any (saith he) wronged with unjust vexation, or providing for his own edification, or in testimony against sin, depart from a Church where some evils are tolerated, and joyn himself to another more pure, yet without condemning of the Church he leaveth, he is not therefore to be held as a Schismatick, or as guilty of any other sin. Where the tripartite disjunction which the judicious Doctor putteth, declareth the lawfulness of the departure of a Church-member from his Church, when either through weariness of unjust vexation, or in way of provision for his own edification, or in testimony against sin, he joyneth himself to another Congregation more Reformed. Any one of these, he judgeth a just and lawful cause of departure, though all of them do not concur together. Neither will such a practise despoil the best Ministers of the Parishes of their best hearers. For,

1. Sometimes the Ministers themselves are willing to joyn with their better sort of Hearers in this way of Reformation; and then they and their Hearers continue still their Church Relation together, yea and confirm it more straitly and strongly, by an expresse renewed Covenant, though the Ministers may still continue their wonted Preaching to the whole Parish.

2. If the Ministers do dislike the way of those whom they otherwise count their best Members, and so refuse to joyn with them therein; yet if those Members can procure some other Ministers to joyn with them in their own Way, and still continue their dwelling together in the same Town, they may easily order the times of the publick Assembly, as to attend constantly upon the Ministry of their former Church; and either after or before the publick Assembly of the Parish, take an opportunity to gather together for the Administration of Sacraments, and Censures, and other Church-Ordinances amongst themselves. The first Apostolick Church assembled to hear the Word with the Jewish Church in the open Courts of the Temple; but afterwards gathered together for breaking of Bread, and other acts of Church-order, from house to house.

3. Suppose Presbyterian Churches should communicate some of their best gifted Members towards the erecting and gathering of another Church, it would not forthwith be their detriment, but may be their enlargement. It is the most noble and perfect work of a living creature (both in Nature and Grace) to propagate, and multiply his kinde: and it is the honour of the faithful Spouse of Christ, to set forward the work of Christ as well abroad as at home. The Church in Cant. 8. 8. to help forward her little Sister-Church,

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Church, was willing to part with her choice Materials, even Beams of Cedar, and such precious living Stones as were fit to build a Silver Palace. In the same Book, the Church is compared sometime to a Garden, sometime to an Orchard, *Cant.* 4. 12, 13. No man planteth a garden, or Orchard, but seeketh to get the choicest Herbs and Plants of his Neighbours, and they freely impart them: nor do they account it a spoil to their garden and orchard, but rather a glory. Nevertheless we go not so far; we neither seek nor ask the choice Members of the Parishes, but accept them being offered.

If it be said, They are not offered by the Ministers, nor by the Parish-churches, (who have most right in them) but only by themselves.

It may justly be demanded what right, or what power have either the Ministers or Parish Church over them? Not by solemn Church-covenant; for that, though it be the firmest engagement, is not owned, but rejected. If it be by their joyning with the Parish, in the calling and election of a Minister to such a Congregation at his first coming, there is indeed just weight in such an engagement: nor do we judge it safe for such to remove from such a Minister, unless it be upon such grounds as may justly give him due satisfaction. But if the union of such Members to a Parish Church, and to the Ministry thereof, be only by cohabitation within the Precincts of the Parish, that union, as it was founded upon Humane Law, so by Humane Law it may easily be released. Or otherwise, if a man remove his Habitation, he removeth also the bond of his Relation, and the ground of offence.

4. It need not be feared, that all the best Hearers of the best Ministers, nor the most of them, will depart from them upon point of Church-government. Those who have found the presence and power of the Spirit of Christ breathing in their Ministers, either to their conversion, or edification, will be slow to change such a Ministry of Faith and Holiness, for the liberty of Church-order. Upon which ground, and sundry other such like, there be doubtless sundry godly and judicious Hearers in many Parishes in England, that do and will prefer their relation to their Ministers (though in a Presbyterian way) above the Congregational Confederation.

5. But if all, or the most part of the best Hearers of the best Ministers of Parishes should depart from them, as preferring in their judgements the Congregational Way; yet in case the Congregational Way should prove to be of Christ, it will never grieve the holy hearts of godly Ministers, that their Hearers should follow Christ: yea many of themselves (upon due deliberation) will be ready to go along with them. It never grieved nor troubled *John Baptist*, that his Disciples departed from him to follow after

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Christ, *Job 3.* But if the Congregational Way should prove to be, not the Institution of Christ (as we take it) but the Invention of men; then doubtless the Presbyterian Form (if it be of God) will swallow up the other, as *Moses Rod* devoured the Rods of the *Egyptians*. Nor will this put a necessity upon both the opposite Parties to shift for themselves, and to seek to supplant one another, but only it will call upon them *ἀναζητεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν*, to seek and to follow the truth in love, to attend in faithfulness each unto his own Flock, and to administer to them all the holy things of God, and their portion of food in due season: and as for others, quietly to forbear them, and yet to instruct them with meekness that are contrary minded, leaving it to Christ (in the use of all good means) to reveal his own truth in his own time, and mean-while endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, *Phil. 3. 15, 16. Eph. 4. 3.*

To the second Exception, That we take no course for the gaining, and healing, and calling in of ignorant and erroneous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our Churches, and so exclude them from the Remedy of Church-Discipline.

We conceive the receiving of them into our Churches would rather lose and corrupt our Churches, then gain and heal them. A little Leaven laid in a lump of dough, will sooner leaven the whole lump, then the whole lump will sweeten it. We therefore finde it safer to square rough and unheewn stones before they be laid into the building, rather then to hammer and hew them when they lye unevenly in the building. And accordingly, two means we use to gain and call in such as are ignorant and scandalous:

1. The publick Ministry of the Word, upon which they are invited by counsel, and required by wholesome Laws. And the Word it is, which is the power of God to salvation, to the calling and winning of Souls.

2. Private Conference, and conviction by the Elders, and other able Brethren of the Church: whom they do the more respectfully hearken unto, when they see no hope of enjoying Church-fellowship, or participation in the Sacraments for themselves or their children, till they approve their judgements to be sound and orthodox, and their lives subdant to some hope of a godly conversation. What can Classical Discipline, or Excommunication it self do more in this case?

The third Exception wrappeth up in it a threefold domestical inconvenience, and each of them meet to be eschewed, 1. Disunion in families between each Relation. 2. Disappointment of edification, for want of opportunity in the governours of families to take account of things heard by their children and servants. 3. Disbursements of chargeable maintenance

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to the several Churches, whereto the several persons of their families are joyned.

All which Inconveniencies either do not fall out in Congregational Churches, or are easily redressed. For, none are orderly admitted into Congregational Churches, but such as are well approved by good testimony to be duly observant of Family-relations: or if any otherwise disposed should creep in, they are either orderly healed, or duly removed in a way of Christ. Nor are they admitted, unless they can give some good account of their profiting by Ordinances, before the Elders and Brethren of the Church, and much more to their Parents and Masters. Godly Tutors in the University can take an account of their Pupils; and godly Householders in the City can take account of their Children and servants, how they profit by the Word they have heard in several Churches, and that to the greater edification of the whole Family, by the variety of such Administrations. Bees may bring the more Honey and Wax into the Hive, when they are not limited to one Garden of flowers, but may fly abroad to many.

Nor is any charge exprest from Wives, Children or Servants to the maintenance of Congregational Churches, further then they be furnished with personal Estates, or Livings, which may enable them to contribute of such things as they have, and not of such as they have not. God accepteth not Robbery for a sacrifice. And though a godly Householder may justly take himself bound in conscience to contribute to any such Church, whereto his Wife, or children, or servants do stand in Relation; yet that will not aggravate the burthen of his charge, no more then if they were received Members of the same Church whereto himself is related.

But why do we stand thus long to plead exemptions from Exceptions? The Lord help all his faithful Servants (whether Presbyterian, or Congregational) to judge and shame our selves before the Lord, for all our former compliances to greater Enormities in Church Government, then are to be found either in the Congregational or Presbyterian Way: and then surely either the Lord will clear up his own Will to us, and so frame and subdue us all to one minde, and one way, (Ezek. 43. 10, 11.) or else we shall learn to bear one anothers burthens in a spirit of meekness. It will then doubtless be far from us, so to attest the Discipline of Christ, as to detest the Disciples of Christ; so to contend for the seamless Coat of Christ, as to crucifie the living Members of Christ; so to divide our selves about Church communion, as through breaches to open a wide gap for a deluge of Antichristian and profane malignity to swallow up both Church and Civil State.

What shall we say more? Is difference about Church-order become the inlet of all the disorders in the Kingdom? Hath the Lord indeed left us to such hardness of heart, that Church-Government shall become a snare to Zion, (as sometimes

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Moses was to Egypt. Exod. 10. 7) that we cannot leave contesting and contending about it, till the Kingdome be destroyed? Did not the Lord Jesus, when he dedicated his sufferings for his Church, and his also unto his Father, make it his earnest and onely prayer for us in this world, that we all might be one in him? Joh. 17 20, 21, 22, 23. And is it possible that he (whom the Father heard alwayes Joh. 11. 42.) should not have this last most solemn Prayer heard and granted? or shall it be granted for all the Saints elsewhere, and not for the Saints in England; so that amongst them disunion shall grow even about Church-Union and Communion? If it be possible for a little faith (so much as a grain of mustard-seed) to remove a mountain, is it not possible for so much strength of faith as is to be found in all the godly in the Kingdome, to remove those Images of Jealousie, and to cast those stumbling-blocks out of the way, which may hinder the free passage of brotherly love amongst Brethren? It is true indeed, the National Covenant doth justly engage both Parties faithfully to endeavour the utter extirpation of the Antichristian Hierarchy, and much more of all Blasphemies, Heresies, and Errors. Certainly, if Congregational Discipline be Independent from the inventions of men, is it not much more Independent from the delusions of Satan? What fellowship hath Christ with Belial? light with darkness? Truth with Error? The faithful Jews needed not the help of the Samaritans to re-edifie the Temple of God; yea they rejected their help when it was offered, Ezra 4. 1, 2, 3. And if the Congregational Way be a way of truth, (as we believe) and if the Brethren that walk in it be zealous of the Truth, and hate every false way (as by the Rule of their holy Discipline they are instructed, 2 Joh. 10, 11. then verily there is no Branch in the National Covenant, that engageth the Covenanters to abhor either the Congregational Churches, or their way: which being duly administered, do no less effectually extirpate the Antichristian Hierarchy, and all Blasphemies, Heresies, and pernicious Errors, then the other way of Discipline doth, which is more generally and publickly received and ratified.

But the Lord Jesus commune with all our hearts in secret: and He who is the King of his Church, let him be pleased to exercise his Kingly Power in our spirits, that so his Kingdome may come into our Churches in Purity and Peace. Amen. Amen.



C H A P. I.

*Of the Form of Church-Government; and that it is one,
immutable, and prescribed in the Word.*

ECclesiastical Policy, or Church-Government or Discipline, is nothing else but that Form and Order that is to be observed in the Church of Christ upon earth, both for the Constitution of it, and all the Administrations that therein are to be performed. Ezek 47. 11.
Col 2. 5.
1 Tim. 3. 15.

2. Church-Government is considered in a double respect; either in regard of the parts of Government themselves, or necessary circumstances thereof. The parts of Government are prescribed in the Word, because the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Law-giver of his Church, is no less faithful in the House of God then was *Moses*, who from the Lord delivered a Form and Patern of Government to the children of *Israel* in the Old Testament: and the holy Scriptures are now also so perfect, as they are able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto every good work; and therefore doubtless to the well ordering of the House of God. Heb. 3. 5. 6.
Exod 25. 40.
1 Tim. 3. 16.

3. The parts of Church-Government are all of them exactly described in the Word of God, being parts or means of instituted Worship according to the second Commandment; and therefore to continue one and the same unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a Kingdome that cannot be shaken, until he shall deliver it up unto God, even the Father. So that it is not left in the power of men, Officers, Churches, or any state in the world to adde, or diminish, or alter any thing in the least measure therein. 1 Tim. 3. 15.
1 Chron. 15. 13.
Exod 20. 4.
1 Tim. 6. 13.
Heb. 12. 12. 13.
1 Cor. 15. 24.
Deut. 12. 32.
Ezek. 43. 8.
1 Kings 12. 31.
33. 33.

4. The necessary Circumstances, as time and place, &c. belonging unto order and decency, are not so left unto men, as that under pretence of them, they may thrust their own Inventions upon the Churches, being circumscribed in the Word with many general limitations, where they are determined in respect of the matter to be neither Worship itself, nor Circumstances 2 Kings 12.
Exod. 20. 19.
Heb. 12. 13.
1 Cor. 1. 2. 13.
1 Th. 1. 18.
1 Cor. 14. 9.
1 Cor. 14. 23.
8. 3. 14.

Of the Nature of the Church.

1 Cor. 14. 26.
 & 14. 40. &
 11. 14. & 11. 16.
 & 14. 12. 19.
 Acts 15. 28.

separable from Worship. In respect of their End, they must be done unto edification; in respect of the Manner, decently and in order, according to the nature of the things themselves, and Civil and Church-custome. Doth not even nature it self teach you? yea, they are in some sort determined particularly, namely, that they be done in such a manner, as all circumstances considered, is most expedient for edification: so, as if there be no error of man concerning their determination, the determining of them is to be accounted as if it were divine.

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Of the Nature of the Catholick Church in general, and in special of a particular Visible Church.

Eph. 1. 22, 23.
 & 5. 25, 26, 30.
 Hebr. 12. 23.

THe Catholick Church, is the whole Company of those that are elected, redeemed, and in time effectually called from the state of sin and death, unto a state of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Rom. 8. 17.
 1 Tim. 2. 12.
 & 4. 8.
 Eph. 6. 12, 13.

2. This Church is either Triumphant, or Militant. Triumphant, the number of them who are glorified in Heaven: Militant, the number of them who are conflicting with their enemies upon earth.

1 Tim. 2. 19.
 & 2. 47.
 1 Cor. 6. 17.
 Eph. 3. 17.
 Rom. 1. 8.
 1 Thess. 1. 8.
 Isa. 1. 2.
 1 Tim. 6. 12.

3. This Militant Church is to be considered as Invisible, and Visible. Invisible, in respect of their relation wherein they stand to Christ, as a Body unto the Head, being united unto him by the Spirit of God, and faith in their hearts: Visible, in respect of the profession of their faith, in their persons, and in particular Churches. And so there may be acknowledged an Universal Visible Church.

Abs. 19. 1.
 Col. 1. 5.
 Mat. 18. 17.
 1 Cor. 5. 12.

4. The Members of the Militant Visible Church, considered either as not yet in Church-order, or as walking according to the Church-order of the Gospel. In Order, and so besides the spiritual union and communion common to all Believers, they enjoy moreover an union and communion Ecclesiastical-Political. So we deny an Universal Visible Church.

5. The state of the Members of the Militant Visible Church walking

walking in order, was either before the Law, Oeconomical, that is in Families; or under the Law, National; or since the coming of Christ, only Congregational: (the term *Independent* we approve not) Therefore neither National, Provincial, nor Classi-

6. A Congregational Church is by the Institution of Christ a part of the Militant Visible Church, consisting of a Company of Saints by calling, united into one Body, by a holy Covenant, for the publick Worship of God, and the mutual edification one of another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus.

Gen. 18 19.
Ex. d. 19. 6.
1 Cor. 14 23.
36. & 1. 2. 82
12. 27.
Exod. 19 5. 6.
Deut. 29. 1. &
9 to 15
Acts 2 42.
1 Cor. 14 26.

CHAP. III.

Of the Matter of the Visible Church, both in respect of Quality and Quantity.

THE Matter of a Visible Church are Saints by calling.

2. By Saints, we understand, 1. Such as have not onely attained the knowledge of the Principles of Religion, and are free from gross and open scandals, but also do together with the profession of their Faith and Repentance, walk in blameless obedience to the Word, so as that in charitable discretion they may be accounted Saints by calling (though perhaps some or more of them be unsound, and hypocrites inwardly;) because the Members of such particular Churches are commonly by the holy Ghost called *Saints*, and *Faithful Brethren in Christ*: and sundry Churches have been reprov'd for receiving and suffering such persons to continue in fellowship amongst them, as have been offensive and scandalous; the Name of God also by this means is blasphemed, and the holy things of God defiled and profaned, the hearts of the godly grieved, and the wicked themselves hardened, and holpen forward to damnation. The example of such doth endanger the sanctity of others: A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 2. The Children of such, who are also holy.

3. The Members of Churches though orderly constituted, may in time degenerate, and grow corrupt and scandalous, which

1 Cor. 1 2.
Ephes. 1. 1.
Heb. 6. 1.
1 Cor. 1. 5.
Rom. 15 14.
Ps. 50. 16, 17.
Acts 8. 37.
Mat. 3 6.
Rom. 6. 1.
1 Cor. 1. 1.
Phil. 1. 2.
Col. 1 2.
Ephes. 1 7.
1 Cor. 5 2, 11.
Rev. 2. 14 15, 22
Ezek. 44 29.
& 23 38. 39.
Num. 19 20.
Hag. 2 13, 14.
1 Cor. 11 27 29
Phil. 27. 21.
1 Cor. 14. 6.
1 Cor. 7 13.

Jer. 2. 21.
 1 Cor. 5. 12.
 Jer. 2. 4.
 Gal. 5. 4.
 2 Cor. 13. 21.
 Rev. 1. 14. 15.
 & 21. 21.

1 Cor. 14. 21.
 Mat. 18. 17.

Rom. 16. 1.
 1 Th. 1. 1.
 Rev. 2. 8. & 3. 7

1 Cor. 16. 1. 19.
 Gal. 1. 2.
 2 Cor. 8. 1.
 1 Th. 2. 14.

Acts 2. 46.
 & 5. 12 & 6. 2.
 & 14. 27. & 15.

1 Cor. 5. 4 &
 5. 1

Acts 20. 28.

which though they ought not to be tolerated in the Church, yet their continuance therein, through the defect of the execution of Discipline and just Censures, doth not immediately dissolve the Being of the Church, as appears in the Church of *Israel*, and the Churches of *Galatia* and *Corinth*, *Pergamus* and *Thyatira*.

4. The Matter of the Church in respect of its *Quantity*, ought not to be of greater number then may ordinarily meet together conveniently in one place; nor ordinarily fewer, then may conveniently carry on Church-work. Hence when the holy Scripture makes mention of the Saints combined into a Church-estate, in a Town or City where was but one Congregation, it usually calleth those Saints [*The Church*] in the singular number; as, *The Church of the Thessalonians*, *The Church of Smyrna*, *Philadelphia*, and the like: But when it speaketh of the Saints in a Nation or Province, wherein there were sundry Congregations, it frequently and usually calleth them by the name of *Churches*, in the plural number; as the [*Churches*] of *Asia*, *Galatia*, *Macedonia*, and the like: which is further confirmed by what is written of sundry of those Churches in particular, how they were assembled and met together the whole Church in one place, as the Church at *Jerusalem*, the Church at *Antioch*, the Church at *Corinth*, and *Cenchrea*, though it were more near to *Corinth*, it being the Port thereof, and answerable to a Village, yet being a distinct Congregation from *Corinth*, it had a Church of its own as well as *Corinth* had.

5. Nor can it with reason be thought, but that every Church appointed and ordained by Christ, had a Ministry ordained and appointed for the same; and yet plain it is, that there were no ordinary Officers appointed by Christ for any other then Congregational Churches; Elders being appointed to feed, not all flocks, but that particular flock of God over which the holy Ghost had made them Overseers, and that flock they must attend, even the whole flock; and one Congregation being as much as any ordinary Elders can attend, therefore there is no greater Church then a Congregation, which may ordinarily meet in one place.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Form of a Visible Church, and of Church-Covenant.

Saints by calling, must have a Visible Political Union amongst themselves, or else they are not yet a particular Church, as those Similitudes hold forth which the Scripture makes use of to shew the nature of particular Churches: as a *Body*, a *Building*, or *House*, *Hands*, *Eyes*, *Feet*, and other members must be united, or else (remaining separate) are not a *Body*. Stones, Timber, though squared, hewn and polished, are not an *House*, until they are compacted and united: so Saints or Believers, in judgement of charity, are not a Church, unless orderly knit together.

2. Particular Churches cannot be distinguished one from another, but by their Forms. *Ephesus* is not *Smyrna*, nor *Perga-
mus Thyatira*, but each one a distinct Society of it self, having Officers of their own, which had not the charge of others; Virtues of their own, for which others are not praised; Corruptions of their own, for which others are not blamed.

3. This Form is the *Visible Covenant*, Agreement or Consent, whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the Ordinances of Christ together in the same Society, which is usually called the *Church-Covenant*: for we see not otherwise how Members can have Church power one over another mutually. The comparing of each particular Church unto a *City*, and unto a *Spouse*, seemeth to conclude not onely a Form, but that that Form is by way of Covenant. The Covenant, as it was that which made the Family of *Abraham* and children of *Israel* to be a Church and people unto God, so is it that which now makes the several Societies of Gentile-believers to be Churches in these dayes.

4. This voluntary Agreement, Consent, or Covenant (for all these are here taken for the same) although the more express and plain it is, the more fully it puts us in minde of our mutual duty, and stirreth us up to it, and leaveth less room for

the questioning of the truth of the Church-estate of a company of Professors, and the truth of Membership of particular persons; yet we conceive the substance of it is kept, where there is a real Agreement and consent of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one Congregation, for the publick Worship of God, and their mutual edification: which real Agreement and consent they do express by their constant practise in coming together for the publick Worship of God, and by their religious subjection unto the Ordinances of God there: the rather, if we do consider how Scripture-covenants have been entred into, not onely expressly by word of mouth, but by Sacrifice, by Hand-writing, and Seal; and also sometimes by silent consent, without any writing, or expression of words at all.

5. This Form then being by mutual Covenant, it followeth, it is not faith in the heart, nor the profession of that faith, nor cohabitation, nor Baptism. 1. Not *Faith in the heart*; because that is invisible: 2. Not a *bare Profession*; because that declareth them no more to be Members of one Church then of another: 3. Not *cohabitation*; Atheists or Infidels may dwell together with Believers: 4. Not *Baptism*; because it presupposeth a Church-estate, as circumcision in the Old Testament, which gave no Being unto the Church, the Church being before it, and in the Wilderness without it. Seals presuppose a covenant already in being. One person is a compleat subject of Baptism, but one person is incapable of being a Church.

6. All Believers ought, as God giveth them opportunity thereunto, to endeavour to joyn themselves unto a particular Church, and that in respect of the honour of Jesus Christ, in his Example and Institution, by the professed acknowledgement of, and subjection unto the Order and Ordinances of the Gospel: as also in respect of their good of communion founded upon their visible union, and contained in the Promises of Christs special presence in the Church; whence they have fellowship with him, and in him one with another: also for the keeping of them in the way of Gods commandments, and recovering of them in case of wandring, (which all Christs sheep are subject to in this life) being unable to return of themselves: together with

Exod 19. 8.
10. 8. & 24. 3.
17. Josh. 24.
18. 10. 24.
Psal 50. 5.
Neh. 9. 38. &
10. 1. Gen. 19.
Deut. 29.

Acts 2. 47. &
9. 26. Mar. 3.
13. 14. 15. &
28. 19. 20.
Psal 133. 2. 3.
& 87. 7.
Mar 18. 20.
1 John 1. 3.

Psal 119. 176.
1 Pet. 2. 25.
Eph. 4. 16.
1 Th. 22. 24. 25.
Mat. 18. 15. 16. 7.

with the benefit of their mutual edification, and of their posterity, that they may not be cut off from the Priviledges of the Covenant. Otherwise, if a Believer offends, he remains destitute of the remedy provided in that behalf. And should all Believers neglect this duty of joyning to all particular Congregations, it might follow thereupon, that Christ should have no visible Political Churches upon earth.

C H A P. V.

Of the first Subject of Church-Power; or, To whom Church-Power doth first belong.

THe first Subject of Church-Power is either Supreme, or Subordinate and Ministerial. The Supreme (by way of gift from the Father) is the Lord Jesus Christ: the Ministerial is either extraordinary, as the Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists; or ordinary, as every particular Congregational Church.

Mat. 18. 18.
Rev. 1. 7.
1st. 9. 6.
1st. 20. 27. 28.
1 Cor. 14. 33.
Titus 1. 5.
1 Cor. 5. 12.

2. Ordinary Church-Power, is either the Power of Office, that is, such as is proper to the Eldership; or Power of Privilege, such as belongs unto the Brotherhood. The latter, is in the Brethren formally, and immediately from Christ, that is, so as it may be acted or exercised immediately by themselves; the former is not in them formally or immediately, and therefore cannot be acted or exercised immediately by them, but is said to be in them, in that they design the persons unto Office, who onely are to act, or to exercise this Power.

Rom. 12. 4. 8.
Acts 1. 23. &
6. 3. 4. 8. 14. 23.
1 Cor. 10. 29.

C H A P. VI.

Of the Officers of the Church, and especially of Pastors and Teachers.

A Church being a company of people combined together by Covenant for the Worship of God, it appeareth thereby,

that there may be the Essence and Being of a Church without any Officers, seeing there is both the Form and Matter of a Church; which is implied, when it is said, *The Apostles ordained Elders in every Church.*

Acts 14. 23.

Rom 10. 17.

1 Cor. 12. 28.

Eph. 4. 11.

Phil. 2. 27.

Eph. 4. 5, 11.

Eph. 4. 12, 13.

1 Cor. 12. 28.

Eph. 4. 11.

Acts 8. 6, 16, 19.

Rom. 11. 43.

1 Cor. 4. 9.

1 Tim. 3. 1, 2, 8.

Titus 1. 5.

Acts 20. 17, 28.

1 Pet. 5. 2, 3.

1 Tim. 3. 3.

Phil. 1. 1.

Acts 20. 17, 28.

1 Tim. 5. 17.

Eph. 4. 11.

Rom. 12. 7, 8.

1 Cor. 12. 8.

1 Tim. 4. 1, 2.

Titus 1. 9.

2. Nevertheless, though Officers be not absolutely necessary to the simple Being of Churches, when they be called; yet ordinarily to their Calling they are, and to their well being: and therefore the Lord Jesus out of his tender compassion, hath appointed and ordained Officers, which he would not have done, if they had not been useful and needful for the Church; yea, being ascended into Heaven, he received gifts for men, and gave gifts to men, whereof Officers for the Church are justly accounted no small parts, they being to continue to the end of the world, and for the perfecting of all the Saints.

3. These Officers were either extraordinary, or ordinary: Extraordinary, as Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists; Ordinary, as Elders and Deacons. The Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists, as they were called extraordinarily by Christ, so their Office ended with themselves. Whence it is that *Paul* directing *Timothy* how to carry along Church-Administrations, giveth no direction about the choice or course of Apostles, Prophets, or Evangelists, but onely of Elders and Deacons. And when *Paul* was to take his last leave of the Church of *Ephesus*, he committed the care of feeding the Church to no other, but unto the Elders of that Church. The like charge doth *Peter* commit to the Elders.

4. Of Elders (who are also in Scripture called *Bishops*) some attend chiefly to the Ministry of the Word, as the Pastors and Teachers; others attend especially unto Rule, who are therefore called *Ruling Elders*.

5. The Office of Pastor and Teacher, appears to be distinct. The Pastors special work is, to attend to *Exhortation*; and therein to administer a word of *Wisdom*: the Teacher is to attend to *Doctrine*, and therein to administer a word of *Knowledge*: and either of them to administer the *Seals* of that Covenant, unto the dispensation whereof they are alike called; as also to execute the Censures, being but a kinde of Application of the Word: the Preaching of which, together with the

Of Ruling Elders and Deacons.

the Application thereof they are alike charged withall.

6. And forasmuch as both Pastors and Teachers are given by Christ for the perfecting of the Saints, and edifying of his Body; which Saints and Body of Christ is his Church: therefore we account Pastors and Teachers to be both of them Church Officers, and not the Pastor for the Church, and the Teacher onely for the Schools: though this we gladly acknowledge, that Schools are both lawfull, profitable, and necessary for the training up of such in good Literature or Learning, as may afterwards be called forth unto Office of Pastor or Teacher in the Church.

C H A P. VII.

Of Ruling Elders and Deacons.

THe Ruling Elders Office is distinct from the Office of Pastor and Teacher. The Ruling Elders are not so called, to exclude the Pastors and Teachers from Ruling, because Ruling and Governing is common to these with the other; whereas attending to Teach and Preach the Word is peculiar unto the former.

2. The Ruling Elders work is to joyn with the Pastor and Teacher in those acts of Spiritual Rule which are distinct from the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments committed to them. Of which sort, these be as followeth: 1. To open and shut the doors of Gods House, by the Admission of Members approved by the Church; by Ordination of Officers chosen by the Church; and by Excommunication of notorious and obstinate offenders renounced by the Church; and by restoring of penitents forgiven by the Church. 2. To call the Church together when there is occasion, and seasonably to dismiss them again. 3. To prepare matters in private, that in publick they may be carried an end with less trouble, and more speedy dispatch. 4. To moderate the carriage of all matters in the Church assembled; as, To propound matters to the Church, to order the season of speech and silence, and to pronounce

sentence according to the minde of Christ, with the consent of the Church. 5. To be Guides and Leaders to the Church, in all matters whatsoever pertaining to Church-Administrations and Actions. 6. To see that none in the Church live inordinately, out of rank and place, without a calling, or idly in their calling. 7. To prevent and heal such offences in life or in doctrine, as might corrupt the Church. 8. To feed the flock of God with a word of Admonition. 9. And as they shall be sent for, to visit and to pray over their sick Brethren: 10. And at other times as opportunity shall serve thereunto.

3. The office of a Deacon is instituted in the Church by the Lord Jesus: sometime they are called *Helps*. The Scripture telleth us how they should be qualified; *Grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not given to filthy lucre*. They must first be proved, and then use the office of a Deacon, being found blameless. The office and work of the Deacon, is to receive the offerings of the Church, gifts given to the Church, and to keep the Treasury of the Church, and therewith to serve the Tables which the Church is to provide for; as the Lords Table, the Table of the Ministers, and of such as are in necessity, to whom they are to distribute in simplicity.

4. The office therefore being limited unto the care of the temporal good things of the Church, it extends not unto the attendance upon, and administration of the Spiritual things thereof, as the Word and Sacraments, or the like.

5. The ordinance of the Apostle, and practice of the Church commends the Lords-day as a fit time for the Contributions of the Saints.

6. The instituting of all these Officers in the Church, is the work of God himself, of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the holy Ghost: and therefore such Officers as he hath not appointed, are altogether unlawful either to be placed in the Church, or to be retained therein, and are to be looked at as humane creatures, meer Inventions and Appointments of man, to the great dishonour of Christ Jesus, the Lord of his House, the King of his Church, whether *Popes, Patriarchs, Cardinals, Archbishops, Lord Bishops, Archdeacons, Officials, Commissaries*, and the like. These, and the rest of that Hierarchy and Retinue, not being plants

Acts 20. 18, 32.

1 Thess. 5. 12.

1 Tim. 5. 14.

Acts 20. 20.

Acts 6. 3. 6.

Phil. 1. 1.

1 Tim. 3. 8.

1 Cor. 12. 23.

1 Tim. 3. 8. 9.

Acts 4. 35.

Rom. 6. 23.

Rom. 12. 8.

1 Cor. 7. 17.

Cor. 16. 2.

1 Cor. 12. 28.

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1 Cor. 12. 28.

plants of the Lords planting, shall all be certainly rooted out, Mat 15.13. and cast forth.

7 The Lord hath appointed ancient Widows (where they 1 Tim. 5. 9, 10. may be had) to minister in the Church, in giving attendance to the sick, and to give succour unto them, and others in the like necessities.

C H A P. VIII.

Of the Election of Church-Officers.

N O man may take the honour of a Church-officer unto himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron. Heb. 5. 4.

2. Calling unto Office is either *immediate*, by Christ himself, such was the call of the Apostles and Prophets; this manner of Gal 1. 1. calling ended with them, as hath been said: or *mediate*, by the Acts 14. 23. & Church. 6. 3.

3. It is meer, that before any be ordained or chosen officers, 1 Tim 5. 12. they should first be tried and proved; because hands are not & 7. 10. suddenly to be laid upon any, and both Elders and Deacons must Acts 16. 2. & be of honest and good report. 6. 3.

4. The things in respect of which they are to be tried, are those gifts and virtues which the Scripture requireth in men that are to be elected into such places; viz. that Elders must be *blameless, sober, apt to teach*, and endued with such other qualifications as are laid down, 1 Tim. 3. 2. Titus 1. 6, to 9. Deacons to be fitted as is directed, Acts 6. 3. 1 Tim. 3. 8, to 11.

5 Officers are to be called by such Churches whereunto they Acts 14. 23. & are to minister. Of such moment is the preservation of this 1. 23 & 6. 3. 4, 5. Power, that the Churches exercised it in the presence of the Apostles.

6. A Church being free, cannot become subject to any, but by a free election; yet when such a people do chuse any to be over them in the Lord, then do they become subject, and most willingly submit to their Ministry in the Lord, whom they have so chosen. Gal. 5. 13. Heb. 13. 17.

7. And if the Church have power to chuse their Officers Rom. 16. 19. and.

Of Ordination, and Imposition of Hands.

and Ministers, then in case of manifest unworthiness and delinquency, they have power also to depose them: for, to open and shut, to chuse and refuse, to constitute in office, and remove from office, are acts belonging unto the same power.

Cant. 8.9.

8. We judge it much conducing to the well-being and communion of Churches, that where it may conveniently be done, Neighbour-Churches be advised withall, and their help made use of in the trial of Church-officers, in order to their choice.

9. The choice of such Church-officers belongeth not to the Civil Magistrates as such, or Dioceſan Biſhops, or Patrons: for of these, or any such like, the Scripture is wholly silent, as having any power therein.

C H A P. IX.

Of Ordination, and Imposition of Hands.

Acts 13.3. &
14.23.
1-Tim. 5.22.

CHURCH-officers are not onely to be chosen by the Church, but also to be ordained by Imposition of hands, and prayer; with which at the ordination of Elders, Fasting also is to be joyned.

Numb. 8.10.
Acts 6.5,6.
& 13.2,3.

Acts 6.5,6. &
14.23.

2. This Ordination we account nothing else, but the solemn putting of a man into his Place and office in the Church, whereunto he had right before by Election: being like the installing of a Magistrate in the Common-wealth. Ordination therefore is not to go before, but to follow Election. The essence and substance of the outward calling of an ordinary officer in the Church, doth not consist in his ordination, but in his voluntary and free Election by the Church, and in his accepting of that Election: whereupon is founded that relation between Pastor and Flock, between such a Minister, and such a People. Ordination doth not constitute an officer, nor give him the essentials of his office. The Apostles were Elders, without Imposition of hands by men: Paul and Barnabas were officers, before that Imposition of hands, Acts 13.3. The posterity of Levi were Priests and Levites, before hands were laid on them by the children of Israel.

3. In

3. In such Churches where there are Elders, Imposition of Hands in ordination is to be performed by those Elders. 1 Tim. 4. 24.
Acts 13. 3.

4. In such Churches where there are no Elders, Imposition of Hands may be performed by some of the Brethren orderly chosen by the Church thereunto. For if the people may elect officers, which is the greater, and wherein the substance of the office consists, they may much more (occasion and need so requiring) impose hands in ordination, which is less, and but the accomplishment of the other. 1 Tim. 5. 22.
Numb. 8. 10.

5. Nevertheless, in such Churches where there are no Elders, and the Church so desire, we see not why Imposition of Hands may not be performed by the Elders of other Churches. Ordinary officers laid hands upon the officers of many Churches: The Presbytery at Ephesus laid hands upon Timothy an Evangelist; the Presbytery at Antioch laid hands upon Paul and Barnabas. 1 Tim. 4. 14.
Acts 13. 3.

6. Church-officers are officers to one Church, even that particular over which the holy Ghost hath made them overseers. Inasmuch as Elders are commanded to feed, not all flocks, but that flock which is committed to their faith and trust, and dependeth upon them. Nor can constant residence at one Congregation be necessary for a Minister, no nor yet lawful, if he be not a Minister to one Congregation onely, but to the Church Universal; because he may not attend one part onely of the Church whereto he is a Minister, but he is called to attend unto all the flock. 1 Pet. 5. 2.
Acts 20. 28.

7. He that is clearly loosed from his Office-relation unto that Church whereof he was a Minister, cannot be looked at as an Officer, nor perform any act of office in any other Church, unless he be again orderly called unto Office: which when it shall be, we know nothing to hinder, but Imposition of Hands also in his Ordination ought to be used towards him again. For so Paul the Apostle received Imposition of Hands twice at least from Ananias, Acts 9. 17. & 13. 3.

C H A P. X.

Of the Power of the Church, and its Presbytery.

Psa' 1. 6.
Eph 1. 22, 23.
Ila. 9. 6.
Mat. 18. 18.

Supreme and Lordly Power over all the Churches upon earth doth onely belong unto Jesus Christ, who is King of the Church, and the Head thereof. He hath the Government upon his shoulders, and hath all power given to him, both in Heaven and Earth.

Act. 1. 27.
R. 14. 23. & 6.
3. 4.
Mat. 18. 17.
1. Cor. 5. 4. 5.

2. A Company of professed Believers Ecclesiastically Confederate, as they are a Church before they have Officers, and without them; so even in that estate, Subordinate Church-power under Christ, delegated to them by him, doth belong to them, in such a manner as is before expressed, *Chap. 3. Sect. 2.* and as flowing from the very Nature and Essence of a Church: It being natural to all Bodies, and so unto a Church Body, to be furnished with sufficient Power for its own preservation and subsistence.

Rev. 3. 2.

1. Cor. 5. 12.

1. Tim. 5. 17.

Gal. 1. 4.
Rev. 4. 8, 9.
Mat. 28. 10.
Eph. 4. 8, 11.
Jam. 4. 12.
Ila. 33. 22.
1. Tim. 3. 15.
2. Cor. 10. 4. 5.
Ila. 32. 2.
Luke 1. 71.

3. This Government of the Church is a mixt Government (and so hath been acknowledged long before the term of *Independency* was heard of:) In respect of *Christ*, the Head and King of the Church, and the Sovereign Power residing in him, and exercised by him, it is a *Monarchy*; in respect of the Body or *Brotherhood* of the Church, and power from Christ granted unto them, it resembles a *Democracy*; in respect of the *Presbytery*, and power committed unto them, it is an *Aristocracy*.

4. The Sovereign Power which is peculiar unto Christ, is exercised 1. In calling the Church out of the world unto holy fellowship with himself. 2. In instituting the Ordinances of his Worship, and appointing his Ministers and Officers for the dispensing of them. 3. In giving Laws for the ordering of all our wayes, and the wayes of his House. 4. In giving power and life to all his Institutions, and to his people by them. 5. In protecting and delivering his Church against and from all the enemies of their peace.

5. The Power granted by Christ unto the Body of the Church and

and *Brotherhood*, is a Prerogative or Priviledge which the Church doth exercise, 1. In *Choosing* their own officers, whether Elders or Deacons, 2. In *Admission* of their own Members; and therefore there is great reason they should have power to remove any from their fellowship again. Hence in case of offence, any Brother hath power to convince and admonish an offending Brother; and in case of not hearing him, to take one or two more to set on the Admonition; and in case of not hearing them, to proceed to tell the Church; and as his offence may require, the whole Church hath power to proceed to the publick Censure of him, whether by Admonition, or Excommunication: and upon his Repentance to restore him again unto his former communion.

Acts 6. 1. &
14. 23. & 9. 26.
Mat. 18. 15.
16. 17.

Titus 3. 10.
Col. 4. 17.
Mat. 18. 17.
2 Cor. 2. 7. 8.

6. In case an Elder offend incorrigibly, the matter so requiring, as the Church had power to call him to office, so they have power according to order (the counsel of other Churches, where it may be had, directing thereto) to remove him from his office: and being now but a Member, in case he adde contumacy to his sin, the Church that had power to receive him into their fellowship, hath also the same power to cast him out, that they have concerning any other Member.

Col. 4. 17.
Rom. 16. 17.
Mat. 18. 17.

7. Church-government, or Rule, is placed by Christ in the officers of the Church, who are therefore called *Rulers*, while they rule with God: yet in case of Mal-Administration, they are subject to the power of the Church, as hath been said before. The holy Ghost frequently, yea alwayes, where it mentioneth Church-Rule, and Church-Government, ascribeth it to Elders: whereas the work and duty of the people is expressed in the phrase of *obeying their Elders*, and *submitting themselves unto them in the Lord*. So as it is manifest, that an organick or compleat Church is a Body Politick, consisting of some that are Governours, and some that are governed in the Lord.

1 Tim. 5. 17.
Heb. 13. 17.
1 Thess. 5. 12.
Rom. 12. 8.
1 Tim. 5. 17.
2 Cor. 12. 18. 19.
Heb. 13. 7. 17.

8. The power which Christ hath committed to the Elders, is to feed and rule the Church of God, and accordingly to call the Church together upon any weighty occasion: when the Members so called, without just cause, may not refuse to come, nor when they are come, depart before they are dismissed, nor speak in the Church, before they have leave from the Elders;

Acts 20. 28.
& 4. 2.
Numb. 16. 12.
Lev. 46. 10.
Acts 13. 15.

H. 4. 4.

nor continue so doing, when they require silence: nor may they oppose nor contradict the judgement or sentence of the Elders, without sufficient and weighty cause, because such practices are manifestly contrary unto Order and Government, and inlets of disturbance, and tend to confusion.

Rev. 2. 2.
1 Tim. 5. 19.
Acts 21. 18, 22,
23.
1 Cor. 5. 4, 5.

9. It belongs also unto the Elders to examine any Officers or Members, before they be received of the Church; to receive the Accusations brought to the Church, and to prepare them for the Churches hearing. In handling of offences and other matters before the Church, they have power to declare and publish the counsel and will of God touching the same, and to pronounce Sentence with consent of the Church. Lastly they have power, when they dismiss the people, to bless them in the Name of the Lord.

Numb. 6. 23,
to 26.

Acts 14. 15, 23.
Rt. 6. 2.
1 Cor. 1. 4.
2 Cor. 2. 6, 7.

Heb. 13. 17.

10. This power of Government in the Elders, doth not any wise prejudice the power of Privilege in the Brotherhood; as neither the power of Privilege in the Brethren, doth prejudice the power of Government in the Elders, but they may sweetly agree together: as we may see in the example of the Apostles, furnished with the greatest Church-power, who took in the concurrence and consent of the Brethren in Church-Administrations. Also that Scripture, 2 Cor. 2. 9. & 10. 6. do declare, that what the Churches were to act and do in these matters, they were to do in a way of obedience, and that not onely to the direction of the Apostles, but also of their ordinary Elders.

11. From the premises, namely, That the ordinary power of Government belonging onely to the Elders, Power of Privilege remaineth with the Brotherhood, (as power of judgement in matters of Censure, and power of liberty in matters of liberty:) It followeth, That in an Organick Church, and right Administration, all Church-acts proceed after the manner of a mixt Administration, so as no Church-act can be consummated or perfected without the consent of both.

CHAP. XI.

Of the Maintenance of Church Officers.

THE Apostle concludes, that necessary and sufficient Maintenance is due unto the Ministers of the Word, from the Law of Nature and Nations, from the Law of *Moses*, the Equity thereof, as also the Rule of common Reason. Moreover, the Scripture doth not onely call Elders *Labourers*, and *Workmen*, but also speaking of them, doth say, that *the Labourer is worthy of his hire*: and requires that he which is taught in the Word, should communicate to him in all good things; and mentions it as an ordinance of the Lord, That they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel; and forbiddeth the muzzling of the mouth of the Ox that treadeth out the corn.

1 Cor. 9. 14. 15.
Mat. 9. 38. &
10. 10.
1 Tim. 5. 18.

2. The Scriptures alledged requiring this Maintenance as a bounden duty and due debt, and not as a matter of Alms and free gift, therefore people are not at liberty to do or not to do, what and when they please in this matter, no more then in any other commanded duty, and ordinance of the Lord; but ought of duty to minister of their *carnal things*, to them that labour amongst them in the Word and Doctrine, as well as they ought to pay any other workmen their wages, and to discharge and satisfie their other debts, or to submit themselves to observe any other ordinance of the Lord.

Rom. 14. 17.
1 Cor. 9. 21.

3. The Apostle (*Gal. 6. 6.*) enjoining, that he which is taught communicate to him that teacheth *in all good things*, doth not leave it arbitrary, what or how much a man shall give, or in what proportion, but even the latter, as well as the former, is prescribed and appointed by the Lord.

1 Cor. 16. 2.

4. Not onely Members of Churches, but *all that are taught in the Word*, are to contribute unto him that teacheth, in all good things. In case that Congregations are defective in their Contributions, the Deacons are to call upon them to do their duty: If their call sufficeth not, the Church by her power is to require

Acts 6. 3. 4.

Of Admission of Members into the Church.

Neh. 13. 11.

11a. 49. 29.

1 Cor. 5. 13. 14.

it of their Members, and where Church-power, through the corruption of men, doth not, or cannot attain the end, the Magistrate is to see the Ministry be duly provided for, as appears from the commended Example of *Nebmiah*. The Magistrates are Nursing-fathers, and Nursing-mothers, and stand charged with the custody of both Tables, because it is better to prevent a scandal that it may not come, and easier also, then to remove it when it is given. Its most suitable to Rule, that by the Churches care each man should know his proportion according to Rule, what he should do, before he do it, that so his judgement and heart may be satisfied in what he doth, and just offence prevented in what is done.

C H A P. XII.

Of Admission of Members into the Church.

1 Chro. 23. 19.

Mat. 23. 21. &
24. 12.

Act. 8. 37.

Rev. 2. 2.

Act. 9. 26.

Rev. 21. 12.

1 Chro. 23. 19.

Act. 2. 18. 20.

42. & 8. 37.

THe doors of the Churches of Christ upon earth, do not by Gods appointment stand so wide open, that all sorts of people, good or bad, may freely enter therein at their pleasure; but such as are admitted thereto as Members, ought to be examined and tried first, whether they be fit and meet to be received into Church-society, or not. The Eunuch of *Ethiopia*, before his admission, was examined by *Philip*, whether he did believe on Jesus Christ with all his heart. The Angel of the Church at *Ephesus* is commended, for trying such as said they were Apostles, and were not. There is like reason for trying of them that profess themselves to be Believers. The Officers are charged with the keeping of the doors of the Church, and therefore are in a special manner to make triall of the fitness of such who enter. Twelve Angels are set at the gates of the Temple, lest such as were *Ceremonially unclean* should enter thereinto.

2. The things which are requisite to be found in all Church-members, are *Repentance* from sin, and *Faith* in Jesus Christ: and therefore these are the things whereof men are to be examined at their admission into the Church, and which then they must

must profess and hold forth in such sort, as may satisfy *rational charity* that the things are there indeed. *John Baptist* admitted men to Baptism, confessing and bewailing their sins: and of other it is said, that *they came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.* Mat. 3. 6. Acts 19. 18.

3. The weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in those that desire to be admitted into the Church; because weak Christians, if *sincere*, have the *substance* of that Faith, Repentance and Holiness which is required in Church-members; and such have most need of the Ordinances for their confirmation and growth in grace. The Lord Jesus would not quench the smouldering flax, nor break the bruised reed, but gather the tender lambs in his arms, and carry them gently in his bosom. Such charity and tenderness is to be used, as the weakest Christian, if sincere, may not be excluded nor discouraged. Severity of examination is to be avoided. Rom. 14. 1. 1st. 12. 10. 1st. 40. 11.

4. In case any through excessive fear, or other infirmity, be unable to make their personal Relation of their spiritual estate in publick, it is sufficient that the Elders having received private satisfaction, make relation thereof in publick before the Church, they testifying their assents thereto: this being the way that tendeth most to edification. But whereas persons are of greater Abilities, there it is most expedient that they make their Relations and Confessions personally with their own mouth, as *David* professeth of himself. Psalm 66. 16.

5. A personal and publick Confession, and declaring of Gods manner of working upon the soul, is both lawful, expedient, and useful, in sundry respects, and upon sundry grounds. Those three thousand. *Acts 2. 37, 41.* before they were admitted by the Apostles, did manifest that they were pricked in their hearts at *Peters* Sermon, together with earnest desire to be delivered from their sins, which now wounded their consciences, and their ready receiving of the word of Promise and Exhortation. We are to be ready to render a reason of the hope that is in us, to every one that asketh us; therefore we must be able and ready upon any occasion to declare and shew our Repentance for sin, Faith unfeigned, and effectual Calling, because these are the reason of a well-grounded hope. 1 Pet. 3. 15. Heb. 5. 11. Eph. 1. 18.

I have not hid-
den

Of Admission of Members into the Church.

den thy righteousness from the great congregation, Psal. 40. 10.

6. This profession of Faith and Repentance, as it must be made by such at their Admission, that were never in Church-society before; so nothing hindreth, but the same way also be performed by such as have formerly been Members of some other Church, and the Church to which they now joyn themselves as Members, may lawfully require the same. Those three thousand, *Acts 2.* which made their Confession, were Members of the Church of the Jews before, so were they that were baptized by *John*. Churches may erre in their admission; and persons regularly admitted, may fall into offence. Otherwise, if Churches might obtrude their Members, or if Church-members might obtrude themselves upon other Churches without due triall, the matter so requiring, both the liberty of Churches would hereby be infringed, in that they might not examine those, concerning whose fitness for communion they were unsatisfied: and besides the infringing of their liberty, the Churches themselves would unavoidably be corrupted, and the Ordinances defiled, whilst they might not refuse, but must receive the unworthy: which is contrary unto the Scripture, teaching that all Churches are Sisters, and therefore equal.

7. The like trial is to be required from such Members of the Church as were born in the same, or received their Membership, and were baptized in their Infancy, or minority, by virtue of the Covenant of their Parents, when being grown up unto years of discretion, they shall desire to be made partakers of the Lords Supper: unto which, because holy things must not be given unto the unworthy, therefore it is requisite, that these as well as others should come to their triall and examination, and manifest their Faith and Repentance by an open Profession thereof, before they are received to the Lords Supper; and otherwise not to be admitted thereunto. Yet these Church-members that were so born, or received in their Childhood, before they are capable of being made partakers of full Communion, have many Priviledges which others (not Church-members) have not: they are in Covenant with God, have the Seal thereof upon them, *viz.* Baptism; and so if not regenerated, yet are in a more hopeful way of attaining regenerating

Mat. 3. 5. 6.
Gal. 2. 4.
1 Tim 5. 14.

Cant. 8. 9.

Mat. 7. 6.
1 Cor 11. 27.

rating grace, and all the spiritual blessings both of the Covenant and Seal; they are also under Church-watch, and consequently subject to the Reprehensions, Admonitions, and Censures thereof, for their healing and amendment, as need shall require.

C H A P. XIII.

Of Church-members their Removal from one Church to another, and of Recommendation, and Dismission.

C Church members may not remove or depart from the Church, and so one from another as they please, nor without just and weighty cause, but ought to live and dwell together; forasmuch as they are commanded, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. Such departure tends to the dissolution and ruine of the Body; as the pulling of stones and pieces of timber from the Building, and of members from the Natural Body, tend to the destruction of the whole. Heb. 10. 25.

2. It is therefore the duty of Church-members, in such times and places where counsel may be had, to consult with the Church whereof they are Members, about their Removal, that accordingly they having their approbation, may be encouraged, or otherwise dealt. They who are joyned with consent, should not depart without consent, except forced thereunto. Prov. 11. 16.

3. If a Members departure be manifestly unsafe and sinful, the Church may not consent thereunto; for in so doing, they should not act in faith, and should partake with him in his sin. If the case be doubtful, and the person not to be perswaded, it seemeth best to leave the matter unto God, and not forcibly to detain him. Rom. 14. 23.
1 Tim. 5. 22.
Act. 21. 14.

4. Just Reasons for a Members Removal of himself from the Church, are, 1. If a man cannot continue without partaking in sin. 2. In case of personal Persecution: so Paul departed from the Disciples at Damascus. Also in case of general Persecution, when all are scattered. 3. In case of real, and

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Neh. 13. 20.

not onely pretended want of competent Subsistence, a door being opened for better supply in another place, together with the means of Spiritual education. In these, or like cases, a Member may lawfully remove, and the Church cannot lawfully detain him.

1 Tim. 4. 10.

Rom. 16. 17.

Jude v. 19.

Eph. 4. 23.

Col. 3. 13.

Gal. 6. 15.

5. To separate from a Church, either out of contempt of their holy fellowship, or out of covetousness, or for greater enlargements, with just grief to the Church; or out of Schism, or want of love, and out of a spirit of contention in respect of some unkindness, or some evil onely conceived, or indeed, in the Church, which might and should be tolerated and healed with a spirit of meekness; and of which evil the Church is not yet convinced (though perhaps himself be) nor admonished: for these or like Reasons to withdraw from publick communion, in Word, or Seals, or Censures, is unlawful and sinful.

Is. 56. 8.

Act. 9. 26.

1 Cor. 14. 33.

Act. 18. 27.

6. Such Members as have orderly removed their Habitation, ought to joyn themselves unto the Church in order where they do inhabit, if it may be: otherwise, they can neither perform the duties, nor receive the privileges of Members. Such an example tolerated in some, is apt to corrupt others; which if many should follow, would threaten the dissolution and confusion of Churches, contrary to the Scripture.

7. Order requires, that a Member thus removing, have Letters Testimonial, and of Dismission from the Church whereof he yet is, unto the Church whereunto he desireth to be joyned, lest the Church should be deluded; that the Church may receive him in faith, and not be corrupted by receiving deceivers, and false Brethren. Untill the person dismissed be received into another Church, he ceaseth not by his Letters of Dismission to be a Member of the Church whereof he was. The Church cannot make a Member no Member, but by Excommunication.

Rom. 16. 42.

2 Cor. 3. 1.

8. If a Member be called to remove onely for a time where a Church is, Letters of Recommendation are requisite, and sufficient for communion with that Church; in the Ordinances, and in their watch; as *Phæbe*, a servant of the Church at *Cenchrea*, had Letters written for her to the Church at *Rome*, that she might be received as becometh Saints.

9. Such

9. Such Letters of Recommendation and Dismission, were written for *Apollos*; for *Marcm* to the *Colossians*; for *Phæbe* to the *Romans*; for sundry others to other Churches. And the Apostle telleth us, that some persons, not sufficiently known otherwise, have special need of such Letters, though he for his part had no need thereof. The use of them is to be a benefit and help to the party for whom they are written, and for the furthering of his receiving amongst the Saints in the place whereto he goeth, and the due satisfaction of them in their receiving of him.

Acts 18. 27.
Col. 4. 10.
Rom 16. 1.
2 Cor 3. 1.

C H A P. XIV.

Of Excommunication, and other Censures.

THe Censures of the Church are appointed by Christ for the preventing, removing, and healing of offences in the Church; for the reclaiming and gaining of offending Brethren, for the deterring of others from the like offences; for purging out the leaven which may infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and of his Church, and the holy Profession of the Gospel; and for preventing of the wrath of God, that may justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer his Covenant, and the Seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

1 Tim 5. 20.
Deut 17. 11, 13.
Jude v. 29.
Deut 13. 11.
1 Cor 5. 6.
Rom. 2. 24.
Rev. 2. 14, 15.
26, 200

2. If an offence be private, (one Brother offending another) the offender is to go and acknowledge his Repentance for it unto his offending Brother, who is then to forgive him; but if the offender neglect or refuse to do it, the Brother offended is to go, and convince and admonish him of it, between themselves privately: if thereupon the offender be brought to repent of his offence, the admonisher hath won his Brother; but if the offender hear not his Brother, the Brother offended is to take with him one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established, (whether the word of Admonition, if the offender receive it; or the word of Complaint, if he refuse it; or for if he refuse it, the offended

Mat. 5. 23, 24.
Luke 17. 3, 4.
Mat. 18. 15.
Ver. 16.
Ver. 17.

Tit. 3. 10.

Mat. 18. 17.

1 Cor. 5. 4 5. 11

Gal. 6. 1.

Mat. 18. 34. 35.

2 Cor. 13. 10.

Mat. 18. 17.

1 Cor. 5. 11.

2 Thess. 3. 14.

1 Cor. 14. 24.

25.

2 Thess. 3. 14.

Brother is by the mouth of the Elders to tell the Church; and if he hear the Church, and declare the same by penitent Confession, he is recovered and gained: and if the Church discern him to be willing to hear, yet not fully convinced of his offence, as in case of Heresie, they are to dispense to him a publick Admonition; which declaring the offender to lye under the publick offence of the Church, doth thereby withhold or suspend him from the holy fellowship of the Lords Supper, till his offence be removed by penitent Confession. If he still continue obstinate, they are to cast him out by Excommunication.

3. But if the offence be more publick at first, and of a more hainous and criminal nature, to wit, such as are condemned by the light of Nature; then the Church, without such gradual proceeding, is to cast out the offender from their holy communion, for the further mortifying of his sin, and the healing of his Soul in the day of the Lord Jesus.

4. In dealing with an offender, great care is to be taken that we be neither over-strict or rigorous, nor too indulgent or remiss: our proceeding herein ought to be with a spirit of meekness, considering our selves lest we also be tempted; and that the best of us have need of much forgiveness from the Lord. Yet the winning and healing of the offenders soul, being the end of these endeavours, we must not dawb with untempered mortar, nor heal the wounds of our Brethren slightly. On some have compassion, others save with fear.

5. While the offender remains excommunicate, the Church is to refrain from all Member-like communion with him in spiritual things, and also from all familiar communion with him in civil things, further then the necessity of natural, or domestical, or civil Relations do require; and are therefore to forbear to eat and drink with him, that he may be ashamed.

6. Excommunication being a Spiritual Punishment, it doth not prejudice the Excommunicate in, nor deprive him of his Civil Rights, and therefore toucheth not Princes, or other Magistrates, in point of their Civil Dignity or Authority: and, the Excommunicate being but as a Publican and a Heathen, Heathens being lawfully permitted to come to hear the Word in Church Assemblies, we acknowledge therefore the like liberty

berthy of hearing the Word, may be permitted to persons excommunicate, that is permitted unto Heathen. And because we are not without hope of his recovery, we are not to account him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a Brother.

7. If the Lord sanctifie the Censure to the offender, so as by the grace of Christ he doth testifie his Repentance, with humble confession of his sin, and judging of himself, giving glory unto God; the Church is then to forgive him, and to comfort him, and to restore him to the wonted brotherly communion, which formerly he enjoyed with them. 2 Cor. 2. 7. 8.

8. The suffering of profane or scandalous livers to continue in fellowship, and partake in the Sacraments, is doubtless a great sin in those that have power in their hand to redress it, and do it not. Nevertheless, inasmuch as Christ and his Apostles in their times, and the Prophets and other godly in theirs, did lawfully partake of the Lords commanded Ordinances in the Jewish Church, and neither taught nor practised separation from the same, though unworthy ones were permitted therein; and inasmuch as the faithful in the Church of *Corinth*, wherein were many unworthy persons and practises, are never commanded to absent themselves from the Sacraments, because of the same: therefore the godly in like cases are not presently to separate. Rev. 2. 14, 15.
20.
Mt. 23. 3.
Acts 3. 1.
1 Cor. 6. 2.
15. 12.

9. As separation from such a Church wherein profane and scandalous persons are tolerated, is not presently necessary; so for the Members thereof, otherwise unworthy, hereupon to abstain from communicating with such a Church in the participation of the Sacraments, is unlawful. For as it were unreasonable for an innocent person to be punished for the faults of other, wherein he hath no hand, and whereunto he gave no consent: so is it more unreasonable, that a godly man should neglect duty, and punish himself, in not coming for his portion in the blessing of the Seals, as he ought, because others are suffered to come that ought not: especially, considering that himself doth neither consent to their sin, nor to their approaching to the Ordinance in their sin, nor to the neglect of others who should put them away, and do not; but on the contrary

Of the Communion of Churches one with another.

doth heartily mourn for these things, modestly and seasonably stir up others to do their duty. If the Church cannot be reformed, they may use their liberty, as is specified, *Chap. 13. Sect. 4.* But this all the godly are bound unto, even every one to do his endeavour, according to his power and place, that the unworthy may be duely proceeded against, by the Church to whom this matter doth appertain.

C H A P. XV.

Of the Communion of Churches one with another.

Rev. 1. 4.
Cant. 8. 8.
Rom. 16. 16.
1 Cor. 16. 19.
Acts 15. 23.
Rev. 2. 1.

Although Churches be distinct, and therefore may not be confounded one with another; and equal, and therefore have not dominion one over another: yet all the Churches ought to preserve *Church-Communion* one with another, because they are all united unto Christ, not onely as a Mystical, but as a Political Head; whence is derived a Communion suitable thereunto.

Cant. 8. 8.

Acts 15. 2.

Acts 15. 6.

Ver. 21, 23.

2. The *Communion of Churches* is exercised sundry wayes. 1. By way of *mutual Care*, in taking thought for one anothers welfare. 2. By way of *Consultation* one with another, when we have occasion to require the judgement and counsel of other Churches, touching any person or cause wherewith they may be better acquainted then our selves. As the Church of *Antioch* consulted with the Apostles and Elders of the Church at *Jerusalem*, about the question of Circumcision of the Gentiles, and about the false Teachers that broached that Doctrine. In which case, when any Church wanteth light or peace amongst themselves, it is a way of Communion of Churches (according to the Word) to meet together by their Elders and other Messengers in a Synod, to consider and argue the Points in doubt or difference; and having found out the way of Truth and Peace, to commend the same by their Letters and Messengers to the Churches whom the same may concern. But if a Church be rent with Divisions amongst themselves, or lye under any open scandal, and yet refuse to consult with other Churches,
for

for healing or removing of the same; it is matter of just offence both to the Lord Jesus, and to other Churches, as bewraying too much want of mercy and faithfulness, not to seek to binde up the breaches and wounds of the Church and Brethren: and therefore the state of such a Church calleth aloud upon other Churches, to exercise a fuller act of brotherly communion, to wit, by way of Admonition. 3. A third way then of Communion of Churches, is by way of *Admonition*; to wit, in case any publick offence be found in a Church, which they either discern not, or are slow in proceeding to use the means for the removing and healing of. *Paul* had no authority over *Peter*, yet when he saw *Peter* not walking with a right foot, he publickly rebuked him before the Church. Though Churches have no more authority one over another, then one Apostle had over another, yet as one Apostle might admonish another, so may one Church admonish another, and yet without usurpation. In which case, if the Church that lyeth under offence, do not hearken to the Church which doth admonish her, the Church is to acquaint other Neighbour-Churches with that offence which the offending Church still lyeth under, together with their neglect of the Brotherly Admonition given unto them: whereupon those other Churches are to joyn in seconding the Admonition formerly given, and if still the offending Church continue in obstinacy and impenitency, they may forbear Communion with them, and are to proceed to make use of the help of a Synod, or Council of Neighbour-Churches walking orderly (if a greater cannot conveniently be had) for their conviction. If they hear not the Synod, the Synod having declared them to be obdurate, particular Churches approving and accepting the judgement of the Synod, are to declare the Sentence of Non-communication respectively concerning them: and thereupon, out of a religious care to keep their own Communion pure, they may justly withdraw themselves from participation with them at the Lords Table, and from such other acts of holy communion, as the Communion of Churches doth otherwise allow and require. Nevertheless, if any Members of such a Church as liveth under publick offence, do not consent to the offence of the Church, but do in

Ezek 34 4.

Gal. 11, 10
14.Mat. 18. 1
17. by p
portion.

due

Gen. 18. 15.

due sort bear witness against it, they are still to be received to wonted communion; for it is not equal, that the innocent should suffer with the offensive. Yea furthermore, if such innocent Members, after due waiting in the use of all good means for the healing of the offence of their own Church, shall at last (with the allowance of the counsel of Neighbour-Churches) withdraw from the fellowship of their own Church, and offer themselves to the fellowship of another, we judge it lawful for the other Church to receive them (being otherwise fit) as if they had been orderly dismissed to them from their own Church.

1 Cor. 12. 13.

4. A fourth way of Communion of Churches, is by way of *Participation*. The Members of one Church occasionally coming unto another, we willingly admit them to partake with us at the Lords Table, it being the Seal of our communion not onely with Christ, nor onely with the Members of our own Church, but also of all the Churches of the Saints: in which regard, we refuse not to baptize their Children presented to us, if either their own Minister be absent, or such a fruit of holy fellowship be desired with us. In like case such Churches as are furnished with more Ministers then one, do willingly afford one of their own Ministers to supply the place of an absent or sick Minister of another Church for a needful season.

Rom. 16. 1.

5. A fifth way of Church-communion, is by way of *Recommendation*, when the Member of one Church hath occasion to reside in another Church; if but for a season, we commend him to their watchful fellowship by Letters of Recommendation; but if he be called to settle his abode there, we commit him according to his desire, to the fellowship of their Covenant, by Letters of Dismission.

Acts 18. 27.

Acts 11. 23.

Ver. 29.

Rom. 13. 26, 27.

6. A sixth way of Church-communion, is in case of *Need* to minister relief and succour one unto another, either of able Members, to furnish them with Officers; or of outward support, to the necessities of poorer Churches, as did the Churches of the Gentiles contribute liberally to the poor Saints at *Jerusalem*.

3. When a Company of Believers purpose to gather into Church-fellowship, it is requisite for their safer proceeding, and the maintaining of the Communion of Churches, that they signifie their intent unto the Neighbour-Churches, walking according

according unto the Order of the Gospel, and desire their presence, and help, and right hand of fellowship, which they ought readily to give unto them, when there is no just cause to except against their proceedings. Gal 2. 1, 2, 9. by proportion.

4. Besides these several wayes of Communion, there is also a way of Propagation of Churches: when a Church shall grow too numerous, it is a way, and fit season, to propagate one Church out of another, by sending forth such of their Members as are willing to remove, and to procure some Officers to them, as may enter with them into Church estate amongst themselves. As Bees, when the Hive is too full, issue forth by Swarms, and are gathered into other Hives; so the Churches of Christ may do the same upon like necessity, and therein hold forth to them the right hand of fellowship, both in their gathering into a Church, and in the Ordination of their Officers. Isa 40. 23.
Cant. 8. 9.

C H A P. XVI.

Of Synods.

Synods orderly assembled, and rightly proceeding according to the Patern, *Acts 15.* we acknowledge as the Ordinance of Christ: and though not absolutely necessary to the Being, yet many times, through the iniquity of men, and perverseness of times, necessary to the well-being of Churches, for the establishment of Truth and Peace therein. Acts 15. 2, 3, 15.

2. Synods being Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Assemblies, are therefore made up of Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Causes. The next Efficient Cause of them under Christ, is the Power of the Churches, sending forth their Elders and other Messengers, who being met together in the Name of Christ, are the Matter of a Synod; and they in Arguing, Debating, and Determining Matters of Religion according to the Word, and publishing the same to the Churches it concerneth, do put forth the proper and Formall Acts of a Synod, to the conviction of Acts 15. 2, 3.
Ver 6.
Ver. 7, to 23.
Ver. 31.

Acts 16. 4. 15. rours and Heresies, and the establishment of Truth and Peace in the Churches, which is the end of a Synod.

Chron. 29. 4. 5. to 11. 3. Magistrates have power to call a Synod, by calling to the Churches to send forth their Elders and other Messengers, to counsel and assist them in Matters of Religion; but yet the constituting of a Synod, is a Church-act, and may be transacted by the Churches, even when Civil Magistrates may be enemies to Churches, and to Church-Assemblies.

Acts 15. 1. 2. 6. 7. 4. It belongeth unto Synods and Councils, to debate and determine Controversies of Faith, and Cases of Conscience; *Chron. 11. 13.* to clear from the Word holy directions for the holy Worship of God, and good Government of the Church; to bear witness against Mal-Administration and Corruption in Doctrine or Manners in any particular Church; and to give directions for the Reformation thereof: Not to exercise Church censures in way of Discipline, nor any other act of Church authority or jurisdiction; which that Presidential Synod did forbear.

Acts 15. 24. 28. 29. 5. The Synods Directions and Determinations, so far as consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not onely for their agreement therewith (which is the principal ground thereof, and without which they binde not at all) but also secondarily for the Power whereby they are made, as being an Ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his Word.

Acts 15. 6. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, for many Churches to come together in one place, in all their Members universally; therefore they may assemble by their Delegates or Messengers, as the Church of *Antioch* went not all to *Jerusalem*, but some select men for that purpose. Because none are or should be more fit to know the state of the Churches, nor to advise of wayes for the good thereof, then Elders; therefore it is fit that in the choice of the Messengers for such Assemblies, they have special respect unto such: yet inasmuch as not onely *Paul* and *Barnabas*, but certain others also were sent to *Jerusalem* from *Antioch*, *Acts 15.* and when they were come to *Jerusalem*, not onely the Apostles and Elders, but other Brethren also do assemble, and meet about the matter; therefore

fore Synods are to consist both of Elders, and other Church-members, endued with gifts, and sent by the Churches, not excluding the presence of any Brethren in the Churches.

C H A P. XI.

Of the Civil Magistrates Power in Matters Ecclesiastical.

IT is lawful, profitable and necessary for Christians to gather themselves into Church-estate, and therein to exercise all the Ordinances of Christ according unto the Word, although the consent of the Magistrate could not be had thereunto; because the Apostles and Christians in their time did frequently thus practise, when the Magistrates being all of them Jewish or Pagan, and most persecuting Enemies, would give no countenance or consent to such matters.

2. Church-government stands in no opposition to Civil Government of Common-wealths, nor any way intrencheth upon the Authority of Civil Magistrates in their Jurisdictions; nor any whit weakeneth their hands in governing, but rather strengtheneth them, and furthereth the people in yielding more hearty and conscionable obedience unto them, whatsoever some ill-affected persons to the wayes of Christ have suggested, to alienate the affections of Kings and Princes from the Ordinances of Christ; as if the Kingdome of Christ in his Church could not rise and stand, without the falling and weakening of their Government, which is also of Christ: whereas the contrary is most true, that they may both stand together and flourish, the one being helpful unto the other, in their distinct and due Administrations.

3. The Power and Authority of Magistrates is not for the restraining of Churches, or any other good works, but for helping in and furthering thereof; and therefore the consent and countenance of Magistrates, when it may be had, is not to be sleighted, or lightly esteemed: but on the contrary, it is part of that honour due to Christian Magistrates, to desire and

crave their consent and approbation therein: which being obtained, the Churches may then proceed in their way with much more encouragement and comfort.

Ezek. 44 7, 9.

1 Cor. 5 11.

Mat. 2 25, 26.

1 Chron. 16 16, 17.

Psalm 122.

1 Tim. 2 1, 2.

1 Kings 15 14.

2 Kings 23 3.

2 Kings 14 4 & 15.

1 Kings 20 41.

Job 29 15 &

1 Kings 15.

Jonah 3 7.

Ezra 7.

Dan. 3 29.

4. It is not in the power of Magistrates to compel their Subjects to become Church-members, and to partake at the Lords Table; for the Priests are reprov'd that brought unworthy ones into the Sanctuary: then, as it was unlawful for the Priests, so it is as unlawful to be done by Civil Magistrates. Those whom the Church is to cast out if they were in, the Magistrate ought not to thrust them into the Church, nor to hold them therein.

5. As it is unlawful for Church-officers to meddle with the Sword of the Magistrate, so is it unlawful for the Magistrate to meddle with the work proper to Church-Officers. The acts of *Moses* and *David*, who were not onely Princes, but Prophets, were extraordinary, therefore not imitable. Against such usurpation the Lord witnessed, by smiting *Uzziah* with leprosie, for presuming to offer Incense.

6. It is the duty of the Magistrate to take care of matters of Religion, and to improve his Civil Authority for the observing of the duties commanded in the first, as well as for observing of the duties commanded in the second Table. They are called Gods. The end of the Magistrates Office, is not onely the quiet and peaceable life of the Subject in matters of Righteousness and Honesty, but also in matters of godliness, yea of all godliness. *Moses*, *Joshua*, *David*, *Solomon*, *Asa*, *Jehozaphat*, *Hezekiah*, *Josiah*, are much commended by the holy Ghost, for the putting forth their Authority in matters of Religion: on the contrary, such Kings as have been failing this way, are frequently taxed and reprov'd by the Lord. And not onely the Kings of *Judah*, but also *Job*, *Nehemiah*, the King of *Nineveh*, *Darius*, *Artaxerxes*, *Nebuchadnezzar*, whom none looked at as Types of Christ, (though were it so, there were no place for any just objection) are commended in the Book of God, for exercising their Authority this way.

7. The object of the Power of the Magistrate are not things meerly inward, and so not subject to his cognizance and view, as Unbelief, Hardness of Heart, Erroneous Opinions not vented; but only such things as are acted by the outward man: neither

neither is their power to be exercised in commanding such acts of the outward man, and punishing the neglect thereof, as are but meer inventions, and devices of men; but about such acts as are commanded and forbidden in the Word: yet, such as the Word doth clearly determine, though not alwayes clearly to the judgement of the Magistrate or others, yet clearly in it self. In these he of right ought to put forth his Authority, though oft times actually he doth it not.

8. Idolatry, Blasphemy, Heresie, venting corrupt and pernicious Opinions that destroy the Foundation, open contempt of the Word Preached, Profanation of the Lords-day, disturbing the peaceable Administration and Exercise of the Worship and holy things of God, and the like, are to be restrained and punished by Civil Authority.

9. If any Church, one or more, shall grow Schismatical, rending it self from the Communion of other Churches, or shall walk incorrigibly or obstinately in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the Rule of the Word; in such case the Magistrate is to put forth his Coercive Power, as the matter shall require. The Tribes on this side *Jordan* intended to make war against the other Tribes, for building the Altar of Witness, whom they suspected to have turned away therein from following of the Lord.

F I N I S.





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